

A Guide for Parents and Carers

CSE [Child Sexual Exploitation]

This guide is to help parents and carers protect children known to them from risks of sexual exploitation. It highlights signs and symptoms of sexual exploitation and advises parents what to do if they are concerned about their own children or other local young people.

In recent months, the media has raised the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation [CSE]. This is a type of abuse which is a relatively rare risk for local young people.

Sexual abusers are more likely to be people we know, and could well be people we care about; more than 8 out of 10 children who are sexually abused know their abuser. They are family members or friends, neighbours or babysitters – many hold responsible positions in society. Some will seek out employment which brings them into contact with children, some will hold positions of trust which can help to convince other adults that they are beyond reproach, making it hard for adults to raise their concerns.

CSE is crime. The child or young person is persuaded by someone older or more powerful, the abuser, to take part in sexual activities, with the abuser or with other people, or in posing for photographs, for example. Sometimes there is gain for the young person – money, friendship, gifts, food or shelter. The abuser often takes the young person through a process to gain their trust before abusing them or using the young person; this is known as “grooming”.

Grooming may be carried out by adults or other young people. Young people will be “recruited” into feeling they are not being abused, and introduced to a lifestyle they feel is normal. Children may experience grooming at parties, in gangs, from older adults or from their peers.

As parents and carers, you will know that young people can change or present challenging behaviour, especially during adolescence. However, you may be worried that your child or someone known to you is at risk of, or experiencing CSE. Get advice and support if you see some of the following warning signs. [Contact details for advice are on the back page].

- Your child’s behaviour has changed - perhaps becoming more secretive, more distant, not seeing their usual friends, dressing in a different way, becoming tired or unwell;
- You may have concerns for the child’s sexual health – sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy scares, associating with older men or women, marks or scars;
- The child may be in possession of more money than usual, or expensive gifts, such as jewellery or mobile phones, which they could not afford;
- The child may receive odd calls or messages, threats or bullying on social media or mobile phones – they may be secretive about calls and messages;
- The child or young person may go missing from home and / or school – afterwards the child may be defensive about their location and activities, returning home late at night, perhaps in a dishevelled state or under the influence of substances or alcohol.

Who to contact if you are worried about a child in Kingston or Richmond:

Kingston SPA (Single Point of Access) 0208 547 5008

Richmond SPA (Single Point of Access) 0208 8917969

If you or a child is in immediate danger you should always phone 999

Useful contacts:

Kingston and Richmond LSCB www.kingstonandrichmondlsqb.org.uk

Parents Protect www.parentsprotect.co.uk 0808 1000 900

PACE www.paceuk.info [Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation]

NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk helpline 0800 800 5000.

NSPCC Childline 0800 1111 free advice for children and young people

www.thinkuknow.co.uk Guide to internet safety for children and families.

This guide is published by Kingston and Richmond Public Health Teams for the local LSCB [Local Safeguarding Children Board].

